

“Whom Shall We Please?”
(Galatians 1:10)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. This morning, we were looking at Paul’s surprise at how quickly the Galatians were deserting Jesus Christ for a Gospel of works.
 - a. The fact that they heard the Gospel was a great blessing: many in the world have lived and died without ever hearing it.
 - b. The fact they understood it and began to follow Christ was a great blessing: many hear it who don’t see any value in it.
 - (i) They think it’s foolish.
 - (ii) They believe it’s a fairytale.
 - (iii) They choose to believe the religion of evolution instead.
 - c. That they would now leave Christ – not by denying Him altogether, but by adding their works to His work – surprised Paul.
 - d. And that they would do this so quickly after learning the truth of God’s grace amazed him.
2. What was the attraction, the appeal of this other system of religion? It gave man something to do.
 - a. There was a religious rite to be performed: circumcision.
 - b. There was a tradition to uphold: Judaism.
 - c. There was a law to keep: ceremonial and moral.
 - d. There was something they could contribute: that fed their pride.
3. But what did Paul think of this modification of the Gospel he preached?
 - a. He said that anyone who changes or distorts the Gospel is accursed.
 - b. And it doesn’t matter who does it.
 - (i) If Paul were to change it, he would be accursed.
 - (ii) If an angel from heaven were to change it, he would be accursed.
 - (iii) If any other man – then, or anytime in the future – might change it, he would bring himself under the wrath of God.

B. Preview.

1. These are strong words, and from someone like Paul, they might be offensive to some.
 - a. The Judaizers and the Jews would be offended, since Paul was setting aside or changing the traditions.
 - b. The legalists would be offended, since they want something to do to contribute to their salvation.
 - c. Those who resist authority would be offended because they don’t like to be told what to believe and do, especially if it corrects them.

- d. Those who don't like to be shown they're wrong would be offended because he's telling them something different than what they already believe.
 - e. They might especially be offended because of the strong language: whoever preaches a Gospel contrary to the one he preaches is accursed – no one likes to be told they're that far off, especially that they are condemned.
2. But Paul doesn't appear to be concerned about what they think.
 - a. What he says is true. The message he's bringing is God's.
 - b. Isn't this the way to honor God: by speaking His truth?
 - c. Now it's true that there are some things we should be willing to be patient on, things that don't have to do with the very heart of the Gospel.
 - d. But when it comes to the Gospel itself, we must guard it jealously.
 3. And this brings us to the heart of what Paul says in verse 10.
 - a. Who was Paul really seeking to please?
 - (i) It couldn't be man, since he was stepping on a large number of toes.
 - (ii) It couldn't be himself, since to speak the truth as he did about the Gospel won him far more enemies than friends.
 - (iii) It had to be God, since this was His truth, His message.
 - (iv) The Judaizers were willing to compromise the truth so that they might continue to court the Jews and not make them their enemies.
 - (v) But Paul was not willing to compromise to make any man his friend: he was willing to have the world as his enemy, as long as he had fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.
 - b. Paul tells us this evening that if we want to be true bond-servants of Christ, we must be willing to do the same: to please God, even if the whole world should hate us. Our mission in life is not to win friends and influence people, but to honor God. Along these lines, let's look at two things:
 - (i) First, we have a job to do: as Christ's bond-servants, we are to do what we can to get the Gospel out.
 - (ii) But second, as we go out with the Gospel, we must not be concerned if being faithful to Christ means we will be hated by men: we must honor God and not be men-pleasers.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, we are Christ's bond-servants, and as such, we must do what we can to honor the Lord by getting His Gospel out.
 1. Paul was a bond-servant of Christ, called to preach the Gospel.
 - a. We need to remember that Jesus originally gave the Great Commission to His apostles: it was a commission to preach the Gospel.
 - b. We also saw that He later called Paul to be His apostle and gave him the same commission: Jesus told Ananias regarding Paul, "He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

- c. And this was something Paul strove to do, whether he felt like doing it or not: Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me” (1 Cor. 9:16-17).
2. Now Paul’s circumstances were special in his particular calling and the authority of his office, but not in the fact that he was a bond-servant of Christ, called to advance the Kingdom of God.
- a. Every believer in Christ is a bond-servant of Christ, not just the apostles.
 - (i) Simeon, the one who was waiting to die until he saw the Christ, was a bond-servant: When he saw Him, he said, “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation” (Luke 2:29-30).
 - (ii) Paul called Epaphras, “Our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf” (Col. 1:7).
 - (iii) He called Tychicus a bond-servant, “As to all my affairs, Tychicus, *our* beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information” (4:7).
 - (iv) He considered Timothy the same, “The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).
 - (v) When John opens the book of Revelation, he said it was “the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place” (1:1). Since it was addressed not just to certain saints, but to all the saints, all the saints are bond-servants.
 - (vi) Perhaps it makes more sense when we consider the word means “slave.”
 - (a) We are all Christ’s slaves.
 - (b) A slave is someone who doesn’t serve himself or please himself, but his master.
 - (c) The Christian is Christ’s slave, who lives only to please Him.
 - b. Realizing that we are Christ’s bond-servants, we need to realize as well that the task of getting the Gospel out is also ours.
 - (i) The Great Commission extends to all of Christ’s bond-servants – to us.
 - (ii) We are also charged with the task of getting it out.
 - (iii) Not like Paul, who was called to devote himself to it full-time.
 - (iv) But like Paul in that we are the slaves of Christ, set apart to Him full-time to do whatever He calls us to do to advance His cause with our time, talents, resources, and opportunities.
- B. But second, we also need to realize as bond-servants, we have a specific charge from Christ to represent Him accurately: we cannot compromise the truth of the Gospel to make it more palatable or pleasing to man.

1. We already saw that Paul was not willing to pull punches when it came to God's truth.
 - a. He was willing to tell it like it was.
 - b. If someone was preaching a dangerous, soul destroying/damning heresy, he was willing to call it such and pronounce God's curse on them.
 - c. It's true that we must become all things to all men.
 - (i) "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved" (1 Cor. 10:32-33).
 - (ii) But this refers to a sensitivity to cultural differences, not doctrinal and moral issues.
 - (iii) This doesn't mean we change what the Gospel says or how we represent Christ and Christianity to others to make it more palatable to them.
 - (iv) This verse by itself destroys the principles of the contemporary church growth/Willowcreek model: we do not accommodate the Gospel to what we believe people will accept – we speak the truth.

2. We must please God rather than men.
 - a. When the Pharisees sent their disciples and the Herodians to try and trap Christ in something they could accuse Him of, the one thing they could count on was the fact that He would not compromise the truth:
 - (i) They said, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" (Matt. 22:16-17).
 - (ii) Jesus couldn't lie about the truth: He had to honor His Father.
 - (iii) And so must we.

 - b. We cannot use the world's methodology for selling their wares.
 - (i) We are called to be different, to be set apart morally, ethically.
 - (ii) James writes, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (4:4).
 - (iii) And Paul writes, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15).
 - (iv) In other words, we must speak the truth.
 - (a) Paul writes, "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor

with a pretext for greed -- God is witness -- nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority” (1 Thes. 2:1-6).

- (b) As we read in our meditation, when Peter and John were commanded not to speak or teach anymore in the name of Jesus – something that not only would have been direct disobedience to God, but also a denial of the truth of the Gospel – they answered, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). And so must we.

3. What does this mean as far as what we are to do?

- a. It means we must not be afraid to speak against false doctrine – doctrine that strikes at the heart of the Gospel – no matter what it might cost us.
 - (i) Paul might have had the Judaizers on his side if he was willing to compromise. But better to have them as enemies, than God.
 - (ii) We might be able to have more friends in this world as well, if we compromise: but we’ll have to sever our relationship with God.
 - (iii) We must be willing to speak out against those who attack the Gospel.
 - (a) The UPC and JW’s anti-Trinitarianism.
 - (b) The antinomianism of the broad evangelical church.
 - (c) The teachings of Harold Camping that Christ has returned and the church now disbanded.
 - (d) The teachings of Federal Vision that we are saved not through the imputed righteousness of Christ, but through His death and our works.
 - (iv) We must be willing to stand for the truth, if we are to be true bond-servants of Christ.
 - (v) It is for these He has prepared a place for in heaven:
 - (a) “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me’” (Matt. 16:24).
 - (b) Jesus prayed, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).
- b. But don’t forget that not every issue is as serious this.
 - (i) If we fight and struggle against one another on every single point we might disagree on, we will soon all be attending churches with a membership of one.
 - (ii) In nonessentials, we need to be patient and tolerant, willing to study the Bible, willing to reason it out in Christian love from the Scripture.
 - (iii) But in essentials, Jude tells us we must “contend earnestly for faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 1:3).
 - (iv) May the Lord grant us the grace and boldness to do so. Amen.